

Applicant : Scott Montgomery
Appl. No. : 09/990,625
Examiner : Akiba K. Robinson
Docket No. : 703602.3

Claims

Claims 1, 4, 12-15, 17-18, 21-23, 27-29, 33, 35, 38-39, 42, 44-45 and 47-48 are hereby amended and claims 7 and 10-11 are cancelled. New claims 49-56 have been added.

1. (Currently amended) A method of determining whether to refund postage of a postal system, comprising:

storing information for a postage transaction relating to a mailpiece in a database, the postage transaction information comprising a tracking ID for tracking capability within the postal system and an associated ~~delivery~~ status;

receiving a postage refund inquiry for a refund from the postal system, the refund being for the postage of the mailpiece; and

retrieving the postage transaction information from the database in response to the postage refund inquiry to determine whether to refund the postage associated with the postage refund inquiry, wherein the postage is refunded based on the ~~delivery~~ status associated with the tracking ID contained within the retrieved postage transaction information.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising refunding the postage based on the retrieved postage transaction information.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising displaying the postage transaction information.

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4. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information associated with the tracking ID from the
postal system; and
updating the ~~delivery~~ status in the database with the confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information.
5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the postage transaction information
further comprises a postage transaction date.
6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the postage transaction information
further comprises a postage transaction date, postage transaction time, destination zip code, service
class, postage amount, and mail piece weight.
7. (Cancelled)
8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the postage refund inquiry is received
from an account administrator.
9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the postage refund inquiry is received
from an end user.
- 10-11. (Cancelled)

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12. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~[[10]]~~, further comprising:
determining that wherein the postage is not refunded if the retrieved ~~delivery~~ status indicates
that a mail piece associated with the tracking ID has been delivered; and
denying the postage refund inquiry.

13. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
applying the tracking ID to a mail piece;
processing the mail piece through a postal authority;
reading the tracking ID on the mail piece; and
updating the confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information to indicate that the mail piece has been
delivered.

14. (Currently amended) The method of claim 13, further comprising not refunding
~~wherein the postage is not refunded.~~

15. (Currently amended) A method of refunding postage of a postal system, comprising:
storing information for a plurality of postage transactions in a database, the information for
each postage transaction comprising a tracking ID for tracking capability within the postal system,
postage transaction date, and ~~delivery~~ a status associated with the tracking ID;
associating the stored postage transaction information with a user account;

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receiving a postage refund inquiry for the user account, the postage refund inquiry requesting the refund from the postal system;

retrieving the postage transaction information from the database in response to the postage refund inquiry; and

refunding the postage for a first postage transaction only if the ~~delivery~~ status for the first postage transaction indicates that a mail piece associated with the tracking ID for the first postage transaction has not been delivered, and the postage transaction dates for the first and second postage transactions are the same.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15,
wherein the information for each postage transaction comprises a destination zip code, service class, and postage amount; and
wherein the postage is refunded only if the destination zip codes, service classes, and postage amounts for the first and second postage transactions are the same.

17. (Currently amended) The method of claim 15, further comprising:
receiving confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information associated with the plurality of tracking ID's; and
updating the plurality of ~~delivery~~ statuses in the database with the confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information.

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18. (Currently amended) The method of claim 17, wherein the confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information is received from a postal authority.

19. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the postage refund inquiry is received from an account administrator.

20. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the postage refund inquiry is received from an end user.

21. (Currently amended) The method of claim 15, further comprising:
applying the plurality of tracking ID's to a plurality of mail pieces;
processing the plurality of mail pieces through a postal authority;
reading the tracking ID on a mail piece; and
updating the confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information to indicate that the plurality of mail pieces have been delivered.

22. (Currently amended) The method of claim 21, further comprising not refunding ~~wherein the postage is not refunded.~~

23. (Currently amended) A method of providing status for a plurality of mail pieces tracked by a postal authority and determining whether to refund postage, comprising:

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storing information for a plurality of postage transactions in a database, the information for each postage transaction comprising a tracking ID for tracking capability within the postal system and an associated ~~delivery~~ status;

receiving confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information from the postal authority;

updating the plurality of ~~delivery~~ statuses in the database with the confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information;

receiving a postage refund inquiry for a refund from the postal system;

searching the database for duplicative postage transactions associated with the postage refund inquiry, wherein the duplicative postage transactions include identical transaction dates, destination zip codes, and postage amounts; and

refunding the postage associated with the postage inquiry if the ~~delivery~~ status for one of the duplicative postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered.

24. (Original) The method of claim 23, further comprising associating the stored postage transaction information with a plurality of user accounts.

25. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein the information for each postage transaction further comprises a postage transaction date.

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26. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein the information for each postage transaction further comprises a postage transaction date, postage transaction time, destination zip code, service class, postage amount, and mail piece weight.

27. (Currently amended) The method of claim 23, further comprising:
applying the plurality of tracking ID's to a plurality of mail pieces;
processing the plurality of mail pieces through a postal authority;
reading the plurality of tracking ID's on the plurality of mail pieces; and
updating the confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information to indicate that the plurality of mail pieces have been delivered.

28. (Currently amended) A centralized postage-issuing computer system for providing status for a plurality of mail pieces tracked by a postal service and refunding postage, comprising:
data processing circuitry;
a database;
a communications module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for receiving confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information from a master tracking computer system;
a database management module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for storing information for a plurality of postage transactions in a database, the information for each postage transaction comprising a tracking ID for tracking capability within the postal system and an

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associated ~~delivery~~ status, the database management module further configured for updating the ~~delivery~~ status with the confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information; and

a filtering module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for selecting the postage transactions in which the one or more postage transaction items are identical, and determining if any of the ~~delivery~~ statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered;

wherein, if the filter module determines that any of the ~~delivery~~ statuses for the selected postages transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered, the database management module credits a user account with a postage refund from the postal system.

29. (Currently amended) The centralized postage-issuing computer system of claim 28, further comprising a ~~delivery~~ status request module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for generating a request for the confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information, wherein the communications module is further configured for transmitting the request to the master tracking computer system.

30. (Original) The centralized postage-issuing computer system of claim 28, wherein the database management module is further configured for associating the stored postage transaction information with a plurality of user accounts.

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31. (Original) The centralized postage-issuing computer system of claim 28, wherein the information for each postage transaction further comprises a postage transaction date.

32. (Original) The centralized postage-issuing computer system of claim 28, wherein the information for each postage transaction further comprises a postage transaction date, postage transaction time, destination zip code, service class, postage amount, and mail piece weight.

33. (Currently amended) A method of determining whether issued postage has been used within a postal system and refunding postage, comprising:

storing information for a plurality of postage transactions in a database, the information for each postage transaction comprising one or more postage transaction items, a tracking ID for tracking capability within the postal system and an associated ~~delivery~~ status;

associating the postage transaction information with a user account;

receiving an inquiry for duplicative postage transactions;

retrieving the postage transaction information from the database;

selecting the postage transactions in which the one or more postage transaction items are identical;

determining if any of the ~~delivery~~ statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered; and

issuing a postage refund from the postal system if any of the ~~delivery~~ statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered.

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34. (Original) The method of claim 33, further comprising displaying the selected postage transactions to a postal authority.

35. (Currently amended) The method of claim 33, further comprising determining that issued postage is unused if the any ~~delivery~~ statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered.

36. (Original) The method of claim 33, further comprising displaying the postage transaction information for the selected postage transactions.

37. (Original) The method of claim 33, wherein the one or more postage transaction items comprises a postage transaction date, destination zip code, service class, and postage amount.

38. (Currently amended) The method of claim 33, further comprising:
receiving confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information; and
updating the ~~delivery~~ statuses in the database with the confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information.

39. (Currently amended) The method of claim 38, wherein the confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information is received from a postal authority.

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40. (Original) The method of claim 38, wherein the duplicative postage transaction inquiry is received from an account administrator.

41. (Original) The method of claim 38, wherein the duplicative postage transaction inquiry is received from an end user.

42. (Currently amended) The method of claim 38, further comprising:
applying the plurality of tracking ID's to a plurality of mail pieces;
processing the plurality of mail pieces through a postal authority;
reading the plurality of tracking ID's on the plurality of mail pieces; and
updating the confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information to indicate that the plurality of mail pieces have been delivered.

43. (Original) The method of claim 42, further comprising determining that issued postage is not unused.

44. (Currently amended) A centralized postage-issuing computer system for determining whether issued postage has been used within a postal system, comprising:
data processing circuitry;
a database;

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a communications module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for receiving an inquiry for duplicative postage transactions; and

a database management module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for storing information for a plurality of postage transactions in a database, the information for each postage transaction comprising one or more postage transaction items, a tracking ID for tracking capability within the postal system and an associated ~~delivery~~ status, the database management module further configured for associating the postage transaction information with a user account; and

a filtering module, when executed by the data processing circuitry, configured for selecting the postage transactions in which the one or more postage transaction items are identical, and determining if any of the ~~delivery~~ statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered;

wherein the database management module is configured to credit a user account with a postage refund from the postal system[[,]] if the filter module determines that any of the ~~delivery~~ statuses for the selected postages transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered, ~~the database management module credits a user account with a postage refund~~; and the filtering module is configured to filter out a refunded postage transaction from the selected postage transactions so that the refunded postage transaction is not refunded multiple times.

45. (Currently amended) The centralized postage-issuing computer system of claim 44, wherein the filtering module is further configured for determining that issued postage is unused if

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the any ~~delivery~~ statuses for the selected postage transactions indicates that a mail piece has been delivered.

46. (Original) The centralized postage-issuing computer system of claim 44, wherein the one or more postage transaction items comprises a postage transaction date, destination zip code, service class, and postage amount.

47. (Currently amended) The centralized postage-issuing computer system of claim 44, wherein the communications module is further configured for receiving confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information, and the database management module is further configured for updating the ~~delivery~~ statuses with the confirmatory ~~delivery~~ status information.

48. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
if the postage is refunded, checking for a change in the ~~delivery~~ status during a period of time after the refund; and

if the ~~delivery~~ status changes within the period of time, forwarding an alert to a postal authority.

49. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein the postal system is operated by either the United States Postal Service, a foreign national postal service or a postage vendor.

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50. (New) The method of claim 15, wherein the postal system is operated by either the United States Postal Service, a foreign national postal service or a postage vendor.

51. (New) The method of claim 23, wherein the postal system is operated by either the United States Postal Service, a foreign national postal service or a postage vendor.

52. (New) The system of claim 28, wherein the postal system is under the operation of either the United States Postal Service, a foreign national postal service or a postage vendor.

53. (New) The method of claim 33, wherein the postal system is operated by either the United States Postal Service, a foreign national postal service or a postage vendor.

54. (New) The system of claim 44, wherein the postal system is under the operation of either the United States Postal Service, a foreign national postal service or a postage vendor.

55. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
determining that the retrieved status indicates that a mail piece associated with the tracking ID has not been delivered.

56. (New) The method of claim 55, further comprising issuing the postage refund inquiry after the determination has been made.